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ABSTRACT

A worldwide review of literacy and basic education for adults and young people led to the following conclusions (among others: (1) returns on basic education are high; (2) universal participation in primary education is still far off; (3) carefully designed programs for adults and young people can pay off in increased retention of skills, compensation for deficiencies in primary schooling, and improvement in primary school effectiveness; (4) no society has come close to achieving universal literacy through primary schooling alone; (5) universal learning strategies must rely on both primary and adult literacy education; (6) programs for adults and young people need to be flexible, relevant to context, and responsive to changing needs; (7) sufficient research exists for effective literacy programming; (8) many past inefficiencies in the provision of literacy can be explained by the application of a single model of literacy; (9) many varying rationales have been successfully applied to literacy and basic education programs; (10) mass campaigns can be effective as policy options, but they run the risk of denying the diversity so essential for success; (11) literacy has to be taught in context to adults; (12) measurable economic outcomes are possible through literacy education; (13) effective international programming presupposes intellectual openness and an active link between theory and practice; and (14) effective aid to education requires long-term commitment. (126 references) (KC)

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WORLD CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION FOR ALL

(Thailand, 5-9 March 1990)

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LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE : Review of Experience

by Phillip Jones

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LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION
FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE:
REVIEW OF EXPERIENCE

by
Phillip Jones

January 1990

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- i As the world approaches the twenty-first century it has become clear that, given sufficient will and resources, the global achievement of universal literacy and basic education is within reach. There can be no doubt that, in general terms, it has been the steady expansion of formal schooling - especially primary schooling - that has laid the foundation for such an achievement. It is also clear that no society has come near to achieving universal literacy through primary schooling alone. In every case in which significant progress has been made, other means - educational and non-educational - have served to consolidate and extend the work of the primary school. Experience shows that any global strategy for universal literacy and basic education that relies on primary schooling alone is likely to suffer significant wastage and inefficiencies, in the absence of complementary strategies. Although universal primary schooling - of sufficient duration and quality - provides the only realistic starting point for universal learning strategies, complementary and subsequent educational arrangements are also essential. They need, however, to be flexible, appropriate to their context, and open to frequent change. This makes their design, implementation and financing a particular challenge.
- ii Evidence is mounting that rates of return from providing basic learning opportunities can be among the most rewarding of social investments. Basic learning provision seems to provide the highest returns in the education sector itself, and outstrips returns from many kinds of non-educational investments as well. Evidence to date has tended to come from analysis of primary education outcomes, pointing to the economic, social and technological gains from providing basic literacy, numeracy and useful knowledge. A major obstacle to even higher economic returns from primary schooling seems to be the usually delayed entry of primary school learners into the workforce. A second major obstacle seems to be the frequent diminution of literacy, numeracy and other skills and knowledge if they are not immediately put to use. These two obstacles are, of course, frequently linked in reality, and together account for much of the wastage and inefficiencies when estimating returns from primary schooling. These costs can be both permanent and considerable. Carefully and selectively designed programs of basic education for adults and young people have been shown to have very considerable potential to (a) maximise the retention of knowledge and skills obtained through effective primary schooling and (b) compensate for deficiencies in the duration or quality of primary schooling.
- iii The key issue confronting providers of basic education to adults and young people is the selection of learners. When the rationale is fundamentally an economic one, in which the learning program is directed at increasing worker productivity, it would be difficult to find a more dynamic area of educational investment. It produces all the benefits of

primary schooling, with the additional advantages of immediate motivation, relevance and application. A second area of dynamic economic potential is young people who, having received some primary schooling, for one reason or another have inadequate literacy and numeracy skills, thereby causing inappropriate employment or unemployment. A short and focussed remedial program can have highly significant economic consequences. In short, raising worker productivity directly through literacy and numeracy instruction, and using such instruction to bring young people to appropriate employment that adequately reflects their capacities, have the potential to provide even higher economic returns than general primary education, provided that the learners are carefully identified and their programs of instruction relevant to their employment.

- iv There are additional compelling rationales for literacy provision for adults and young people, some with a direct economic justification, others having an ethical basis or grounding in equity considerations. In many cases, economic and equity justifications overlap or are blurred, and it becomes difficult to measure outcomes in strictly economic terms. For example, providing literacy, numeracy and useful knowledge to mothers in rural areas can have a profound effect on their fertility, the health of their families, the learning potential of their children, and the cultural cohesiveness of their community. Such outcomes are less easy to quantify when compared with the productivity of salaried workers, but benefits are not necessarily the lesser because they are delayed or difficult to measure. Often the use of equity and human rights arguments to promote the provision of basic education for adults and young people gives rise to concern that such a rationale lacks economic justification, as used to be the case with primary schooling.
- v What is more complex, however, is the basis on which any selection or identification of adult learners should proceed. At times, the promise of significant increases in worker productivity is sufficient justification to include some learners and exclude others. At other times, the potential of community programs for adults and young people to reinforce the work of the local primary school seems adequate justification, providing simultaneously a dual front in the provision of basic education for all. At others, equity considerations make important the provision of learning opportunities for groups previously denied access to primary schooling, not least isolated populations and, in many instances, women and girls.
- vi At the heart of any policy decision concerning priorities in basic education for adults and young people lies the question of the fundamental view of literacy adopted. Is literacy best seen as a communication technique, whereby communication through visual means is regarded as more efficient than through oral means? Or is literacy better seen as a technology whereby cognitive processes can be developed, with literacy and intellectual capacity being seen to be somehow intertwined? Or is literacy something even more profound, affecting the entire range of cognitive processes and how these are employed to view and reflect on phenomena external to the learner, causing a substantial change in the perceptions, understandings and

consciousness of the learner and, indeed, of groups of learners? All decisions concerning adult literacy strategies reflect assumptions about these basic ways of regarding literacy.

- vii These varying patterns have important implications for the content of literacy programs. No teaching program is devoid of content. That is to say, none can be confined to linguistic analysis or communication technique alone. A fundamental issue facing the designers of literacy programs for adults and young people - and this is bound up with the fundamental view of literacy adopted - is to decide what knowledge or skills base is most appropriate as a vehicle for the literacy instruction itself. In this area, there is rich international experience and data. The content used as a vehicle for literacy teaching can take countless forms, whether directly related to present or future job requirements, family health and nutrition, the organisation of community groups, religious experience, political changes, new technologies, leisure, cultural expression, or whatever. What the content can usually provide is a rationale for a program and the motivation for learners to participate in it. This is irrespective of whether literacy is better seen (a) as an end in itself (for example, as an expression of human rights), or (b) as a means to individual growth and development (by encouraging cognitive development and changes in consciousness), or (c) as a means of social and community improvement (through changes in group awareness and values, or through applications of the new skills and knowledge acquired through literacy).
- viii The diversity of experience gained in the twentieth century points overwhelmingly to the view that there can be no single preferred view of adult literacy, no single rationale or justification for it, and no single strategy for achieving it. The choices are many and are complex, and in this very important way the promotion of universal basic education for adults and young people differs from what amounts to a single global model of universal primary education (despite the obvious cultural differences from setting to setting). This means that adult literacy provision can never be neat and tidy, a factor some policy planners and program administrators find daunting. Yet if individual programs for adults and young people need to be flexible and oriented to their particular circumstances, planners and implementors nevertheless have at their disposal a rich array of proven approaches, techniques and materials.
- ix These issues and factors - all capable of assessment in the light of experience obtained over the past 40 or 50 years - point to the need to assess international, national and local arrangements for promoting literacy and basic education for adults and young people. This assessment is particularly urgent in relation to stimulating clearer thinking about the links between primary schooling and less formal, subsequent means of reinforcing and extending what has been attempted in the primary school. It also might clarify which research, policy and planning tasks are the most urgent, from which might come the greatest practical benefits, based on assessments of experience gained to date.

LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

AND YOUNG PEOPLE : REVIEW OF EXPERIENCE

Overview:

1. It can now be cautiously argued that the achievement of literacy and basic education for all is within reach - given sufficient will, adequate resources and appropriate strategies. Bringing the world to this point will doubtless be regarded as a major achievement of the twentieth century. Yet the prospect of completing the task remains fragile. Complexities of many kinds confront the rational ordering of educational priorities in many countries, and errors in planning and implementation can lead to considerable inefficiencies and losses of opportunity. What this paper attempts is a review of experience to date in the struggle to achieve universal literacy and basic education for adults and young people, especially experience gained over the past 40 years. Two fundamental conclusions underpin all that follows:

2. The first conclusion points to the fundamental role of formal schooling - especially primary schooling - in the steady progress towards universal learning opportunities in the twentieth century. In all countries, the primary school has emerged as the major national vehicle for raising the level of knowledge throughout the population, in both urban and rural areas. It has demonstrated its potential to bring literacy, numeracy and useful knowledge and skills within the reach of all, the schools and the teachers often being one of the most important resources available to local communities. The primary school has developed in many countries as an important tool of nation-building and of social and economic integration. For many rural communities in particular, primary education has often been the principal means by which people have developed a political voice and a niche in the national governmental administration. Above all, the primary school has been outstanding as the principal means of giving practical expression to human rights claims for universal literacy and a basic education for all.

3. The second underlying point is that no society has come close to achieving universal literacy through primary schooling alone. The evidence is overwhelming: nowhere has this target been neared without the contribution of other means - both educational and non-educational - serving to consolidate and extend the work of the primary school. What experience shows is that significant wastages and inefficiencies can be expected from any strategy for universal literacy and basic education that relies on primary schooling alone. Complementary strategies and resources are required to guarantee the economic, social and educational benefits of primary schooling - not least in those countries where universal primary education has been achieved. In short, although universal primary

education - of sufficient duration and quality - provides the only realistic starting point for universal learning strategies, what is also essential is a range of complementary and subsequent educational arrangements, particularly for adults and young people (i.e. persons above the age of fifteen years).

A: THE KEY ROLE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLING IN ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Adult and young people's programs in perspective:

4. The 1980s have seen a decisive shift in how literacy and basic education for adults and young people have been conceived and justified. Conventional wisdom in prior decades seemed to regard non-formal patterns as cheap and rapid alternative means for the education of a population. Proponents of adult education frequently argued for a permanent dual system or double track in literacy and basic educational provision. Thinking along these lines often developed in a context of disappointing expansion rates of primary education, coupled with urgent economic and social manpower requirements that literacy programs for adults and young people could address. Many permanent arrangements for non-formal education reflected the assumption that achieving universal primary education was a remote possibility, and that there needed to be some structured, alternative means of achieving a basic education for all (Coombs, 1985; Unesco, 1972; Watson, 1988).

5. Today's conventional wisdom reflects a fundamental shift in favour of primary schooling as the single, key means of achieving universal literacy and a basic education for all. There are many reasons for this, but paramount among them is the way in which universal primary education reflects something of an educational ideal, in that the primary school years remain the optimum perceived age for undergoing formal education. It is accordingly deemed desirable that, sooner rather than later, all citizens in their formative years might have access to primary schooling, which as a result should constitute society's fundamental means for the universalisation of educational opportunity (Bowman, 1984; Bray, 1986; Craig, 1981; Frederiksen, 1981; Husen, 1979; Thompson, 1981; Unesco, 1990; Williams, 1979; World Bank, 1980).

6. This ideal view of universal primary education is often accompanied by a series of strategic and pragmatic justifications. Not least is governmental preference for a structured and cohesive pattern whereby all citizens potentially undergo a planned and stable program of education (Fiala and Lanford, 1987; Smith, 1979; Zachariah, 1985). Primary schooling is seen to present the best prospects for providing a more or less standardised program of educational experience for all. Coupled with this is a growing perception that, at last, the achievement of

universal participation in primary education is a realistic and attainable policy objective, well worth persevering with. Therefore, for both ideal and more pragmatic reasons, a dual track for universal educational opportunity seems now to have been displaced by preference for a single mode.

7. It is of significance that these justifications for the speedy universalisation of primary education are not derived from evidence of greater wastages and inefficiencies apparent in appropriate programs for adults and young people when compared with primary schooling. Unacceptable wastages and inefficiencies in adult and young people's programs have usually been identified in those contexts in which mass targeting (or otherwise random or unselective inclusion of learners) have led to wasted efforts. Any educational program can suffer from inadequate teaching, inappropriate content, and subsequent declines in the students' grasp of knowledge or skills. Adult and young people's programs are not unique in this regard.

8. Only on exceptional occasions have rapid strides been gained through mass "crash" campaigns, the most dramatic having been implemented in the context of radical political upheaval. Successful mass campaigning seems to depend on a combination of very particular circumstances, most of which cannot easily be replicated in day-to-day planning (Arnové and Graft, 1987; Bhola, 1984). Equally unhelpful for mainstream policy formulation have been "human rights" justifications for universal adult literacy: such justifications have often stopped short of providing detailed policy guidance for the most effective means of proceeding. Their significance more often lies in their capacity to stimulate commitments to literacy and basic education, rather than their capacity to shape the precise nature of programming (Jones, 1988).

9. Economists became increasingly convinced during the 1980s that rates of return from providing basic learning opportunities can be among the most rewarding of social investments (Blaug, 1979; Colclough, 1983; Heyneman, 1984; Psacharopoulos, 1981; Watson, 1988). Of all kinds of educational investments, basic learning provision seems to provide the highest returns, and outstrips many kinds of non-educational investments as well. It is important to note that evidence to date has come mainly from analysis of primary schooling outcomes: it is often difficult to compare these returns with those delivered through non-formal education. This is a point of some significance: benefits derived from basic educational provision through primary schooling may be no greater or less than benefits derived through non-formal means. In particular, it is commonly accepted that it is difficult to isolate evidence of the benefits of primary schooling alone, given the usual presence of many potentially constructive educative and socialising influences. What is more feasible, in reality, is analysis of the overall benefits of literacy and basic education, whether they were obtained through primary education, or less formal means, or some combination of the two.

10. For example, much helpful evidence has been accumulated and analysed through the 1980s by the World Bank, which over this period has been intensifying its financing of primary education (Heyneman, 1983). The Bank, keen to monitor the effectiveness of this new priority for financing, has closely scrutinised outcomes, and evidence to date points to handsome returns. However, the virtual absence of Bank financing in the 1980s for literacy and basic education for adults and young people has left Bank analysts with little or no data derived from Bank experience in non-formal education (Romain and Armstrong, 1987). In no way should this relative lack of hard data from the Bank be used to support the notion that returns from primary school-based basic education are either greater or lesser than non-formal bases of provision: there is no evidence one way or the other.

11. What the international community at present finds itself facing is a mounting climate of opinion that (a) returns from universal literacy and basic education for all can be handsome, and that (b) the prior thinking that saw pragmatic benefit in a dual track has been replaced by preference for universal primary education as the key strategy, complemented where appropriate by non-formal means.

Limitations of primary schooling:

12. Despite its proven potential to stimulate handsome social and economic benefits, primary schooling has been well-documented as having, in practice, serious limitations (Bray, 1986; Bude, 1984; Coombs, 1985; Dore, 1975; Frederiksen, 1981; Fuller, 1986; Fuller, 1987; Oxenham, 1984; Weiler, 1978). Three dimensions can be listed with confidence. First, there are those children who never enjoy access to primary education. Frequently they are girls, or are either girls or boys who live in rural areas or urban or semi-urban slums; others belong to ethnic or other minority groups in the population. Second, there is a significant proportion of children who, for one reason or another, do not complete a full primary cycle of schooling. Third, there are those adults and young people (and many are to be found in the most advanced countries) whose primary education has failed to prepare them for various roles in life, whose literacy skills have declined or whose basic knowledge was inappropriate or inadequately acquired.

13. This presents planners with profound questions. In what circumstances are non-formal programs of literacy and basic education justified for adults and young people? In what practical senses can they be regarded as complements to the work of the primary school? And perhaps more importantly: do they have the potential to reduce and compensate for any wastages, inefficiencies and gaps encountered in primary educational provision?

14. It should be noted that many traditional models of adult education have implicitly held the individuals concerned as responsible for these common limitations of primary schooling. What this can sometimes lead to is an assumption that these individuals are unworthy of subsequent educational provision or lack the potential to benefit from it. More often than not, they are the victims of inadequate planning, of economic decline, of structural economic adjustments, or of demography. In reality, as is taken up below, adults and young people so affected frequently constitute an untapped educational and productive resource of considerable potential, capable of providing quick returns from educational investment in them, provided certain criteria are met.

15. Strategists working for the provision of universal primary education ought to be informed by the experience of those countries with several decades of universal provision, most frequently the western industrialised nations. The 1980s have seen widespread realisation of inadequate literacy skills among surprisingly large numbers of adults and young people, by no means confined to marginal groups who lacked a quality primary schooling. The relapse into inadequate literacy is clearly a complex, puzzling phenomenon, only just beginning to be explored and understood in the industrial west. Planners in other parts of the world could do worse than take note of the incapacity of universal primary education - of presumably good quality - to produce universal and lasting literacy in the industrialised west (Limage, 1980; Limage, 1986; Prospects, 1987).

16. Although striving for universal primary education is a rational and worthy policy objective for the international community, it is clear that many countries will need to wait several more generations before achieving universal primary education of acceptable duration and quality (Coombs, 1985). Merely achieving universal access to one or two years of primary schooling by the turn of the century will constitute a remarkable outcome. Far more challenging is the universal completion of the primary school cycle, and bringing all primary educational provision up to acceptable levels of quality. In this light, individual countries are likely to continue analysing the relative advantages of selective and intensive programs for particular groups of adults and young people, who can quickly apply the benefits of their new skills, knowledge and attitudes in their various roles in life.

17. There is a fundamental reason why universal primary schooling is unlikely to guarantee acceptable levels of literacy among adults and young people, even those only a few years out of primary school. This has to do with the existence of a multitude of "literacies". There can be no absolute or universal style of literacy, no single measure, nor any single cluster of universal literacy skills (Adiseshiah, 1976; Caillods and Carron, 1985; Street, 1985). Evidence is mounting of the failure of what might be termed "school literacy" to relate to the full range of economic

and social contexts, tasks, relations and aspirations of adulthood. For example, school literacy might only rarely be deemed pertinent and applicable to commercial or productive realities of village or city life. It might have very little to do with human fertility, reproduction and child-rearing. And so on. School literacy, in reality, reflects a narrow band of potential literacies, and if it is not quickly applied with on-going force and meaning, relapse into inadequate literacy levels can be expected. This relates to a key policy issue taken up below: the need to make explicit and to clarify the underlying view of literacy adopted. In the same way, evidence for this variety of literacies and the unavailability of any single measure of literacy suggests that it is time for the international community to re-think its use of the term illiteracy. Absolute distinctions between literacy and illiteracy are impossible to determine, and are unhelpful guides to policy.

18. Associated with this highly relative nature of literacy is a further consideration - does there exist a minimum threshold of primary schooling (defined qualitatively or quantitatively) which guarantees permanent retention of the technical components of literacy skills? This consideration is perhaps a by-product of traditional and now-discredited concerns to define literacy as the equivalent of a stated number of years of primary schooling. It seeks assurance that universal primary education of a defined quality and duration will lead, through demographic attrition, to universal literacy at all age levels. Evidence to date points to the firm conclusion that such an assurance cannot be provided. Many other factors seem equally relevant to literacy retention, not least individual motivation and collective need, the availability and relevance of reading materials, and the language of literacy. Quality and duration of primary schooling cannot be isolated as the crucial factors in literacy retention, just as these associated factors cannot be held constant in comparative analyses.

19. Two other fundamental factors limit the absolute potential of universal primary education strategies, each being beyond the control of the primary school. The first relates to the delay experienced by many primary school leavers before entering the workforce. Such a delay can reinforce any tendency for literacy and basic skills to contract, whether through lack of application, or through shifts in the circumstances in which they were originally intended to be applied. Even if "school literacy" related closely to those "social and economic literacies" foreseen at the time of primary schooling, all are so context-bound that they can only be regarded as fragile and transitory. The commonly-delayed entry of primary school leavers into the salaried workforce and into a variety of other adult roles places considerable limitations on the capacities of primary education to relate to adult life (Simmons, 1980). Again, through no fault of its own, the primary school faces real limitations as the single, key vehicle for social literacy and the range of basic skills, knowledge and attitudes needed in adulthood. Much of what primary education of sufficient duration and quality can achieve is very considerable, but its capacities should not be overstated.

20. The second factor lying beyond the confines of the primary school concerns the extent and depth of community support for literacy and basic education. Communities in which only sluggish progress has been made towards widespread provision of quality primary education are, perforce, communities in which there persist widespread inadequacies in community literacy (Caillods and Carron, 1985; Jamison and Lockheed, 1985; Kasaju and Manandhar, 1985; Shrestha, 1986). Much of this has to do with perceptions of the relevance of schooling to family and community values and aspirations. The evidence is now overwhelming that determinants of school effectiveness cannot be understood solely within the school: the absence of adequate literacy among adults and young people in the community has been identified as a powerful disabler of primary school effectiveness. Insufficient is known about how this interaction works itself out in practice. Family and community resistance to the work of the local primary school can constitute a powerful obstacle to its effectiveness. Perceptions of the introduction of alien values, as well as the physical absence of children from the home, workshop or fields, can lead to alienation of the primary school from its community. Once the benefits and outcomes of primary schooling are owned by the community, resistance to schooling may well be replaced by an insatiable demand for it. In the meantime, much wastage and inefficiency occurs because the school, as an agency of literacy, is striving to function without the support of community literacy. It is here that evidence exists of the capacity of primary schooling and literacy programs for adults and young people to reinforce each other, adding to the quality, pertinence and effectiveness of each. This association may become less important as overall levels of literacy in the community rise, but it can prevent very considerable inefficiencies. Seen in this light, judicious provision of community programs of literacy and basic education for the wider population can in fact hasten the achievement of genuinely universal participation in primary schooling.

Conclusions to Part A:

21. 1. Evidence is mounting that rates of return from providing basic learning opportunities can be among the most rewarding of social investments.
2. Much evidence to date has focussed on primary schooling, but other evidence as well as the force of logic points to the benefits of literacy and basic educational provision for appropriate groups of adults and young people.
3. A range of limitations to gaining even higher returns from primary education can be documented, which accompany the sobering fact that universal access and participation in primary education of acceptable duration and quality is still far off.

4. Carefully and selectively designed programs for adults and young people can be shown to have very considerable potential to (a) maximise the retention and extend the relevance of knowledge, skills and attitudes obtained through effective primary schooling, (b) compensate for deficiencies in the duration or quality of primary schooling, and (c) foster greater community empathy for the work of the primary school, a major determinant of school effectiveness.

B: STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RETURNS FROM PRIMARY SCHOOLING

Consolidating and extending the work of the primary school:

22. At this point the breadth of community services that can strengthen and reinforce the work of the primary school needs to be acknowledged. These can effectively compensate for limitations in the penetration, duration and quality of primary education. In many cases, they carry the potential to provide cost-effective and efficient means of minimising some of the limitations apparent in primary education. Programs of literacy and basic education for adults and young people are clearly relevant in this context, but need to be considered alongside a larger number of social institutions and services.

23. The prominent formal means of consolidating primary education is, of course, obtained through secondary education, as well as through technical and vocational training institutions. In all societies, they play a powerful role in extending the provision of general education, to greater or lesser proportions of the population. In fact, for the industrial west it has been the steady expansion of secondary education in the twentieth century that has served to underpin the work of primary schooling as a vehicle for universal literacy (Connell, 1980).

24. However, in most countries secondary schools and technical and vocational training are inappropriate means of consolidating literacy and basic education, particularly on a widespread scale. These formal educational institutions have other economic and social functions to perform that are more urgent. In addition, their rapid and unselective expansion has proven, in a large number of countries, to have been beyond the budgetary capacity of governments. In short, experience in the expansion of secondary, technical and vocational systems of education shows that it must proceed steadily, and not outstrip the capacity of the economy (and labour market in particular) to provide it with a powerful role in producing required manpower (Dore, 1976; Oxenham, 1984; Simmons, 1980). As a vehicle for extending general education, these formal institutions would seem in most societies to be prohibitively expensive, and a far from

viable option for consolidating the education received by all persons who have attended primary school.

25. By contrast, many other social institutions have proven themselves to be cost-effective and educationally useful in the consolidation of primary schooling. Temple schools (which frequently provide formal instruction in addition to preparation for religious observances) are resources of considerable importance in many societies. Many have a long and noble tradition of providing instruction, and in some countries have retained their position as an important promoter of literacy. Printed and electronic mass media also are crucial means of providing formal, non-formal and incidental basic learning opportunities. A wide variety of means has emerged whereby the media function in this way. On-the-job training is of clear significance, and employers often play an educational role that is greater than is commonly supposed.

26. Opportunities for the extension of literacy and basic learning are often transitory, yet these can be highly significant if grasped. For example, many successful programs have been integrated with groundswells of local and community change, such as the introduction of land reform, major initiatives directed at community health and nutrition, the arrival of new technologies in a community, or some other factor (political, economic or religious) causing deep social change. Programs that capitalise on these circumstances often need to be quickly conceived and implemented. Furthermore, there are the well-documented cases in which radical political change has been consolidated, extended and celebrated by widespread, intensive programs of literacy, basic education and, frequently, political instruction (Arnove and Graff, 1987; Bhola, 1984). This range of observed complementary means of consolidating and extending what the primary school would achieve in an ideal world is extremely complex. Some can be planned for, others not. Conditions for the effectiveness of some can be simulated or replicated, but not for others. Some interact with others (or with primary schooling) in straightforward ways, but many do not (Hurst, 1983).

27. These complexities have occasionally contributed to unwarranted climates of opinion concerning non-formal education (especially for adults and young people) that see them as difficult, inefficient and unduly expensive means of educational provision, especially when compared with perceptions of orderly, predictable and systematised patterns of schooling. Some economic models (whether applied to planning or to analyses of outcomes) seem poorly disposed towards non-formal avenues, which render things less neat and tidy. Such climates of opinion when they emerge are often intangible and difficult to document, and frequently disguise less clear policy objectives, but in their quiet way can have an important effect on preferred policy.

Conclusions to Part B:

28. 1. If universal primary schooling is society's most viable single option for the provision of basic learning opportunities, experience has also shown that no society has come near to achieving universal literacy through primary schooling alone. Other complementary means have served to reinforce and extend the work of primary schooling.
2. This experience implies that any global strategy for universal literacy and basic education which relies on primary schooling alone is likely to suffer significant wastage and inefficiencies.
3. Universal learning strategies need to be perceived in terms of the joint contribution of primary schooling together with literacy and basic education for adults and young people.
4. Programs for adults and young people, however, have a particular need to be flexible, demonstrably relevant to context, and responsive to shifting circumstances and needs. This makes their design, implementation and financing a particular challenge.
5. At times, a close relationship will seem appropriate between primary education and programs for adults and young people. At others, this need will not be so great.

C: LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE : POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF EXPERIENCE TO DATE

A note concerning evidence:

29. Despite the existence of much evidence derived from experience over the past 40 years or so, it must be said that far better documentation of all aspects of literacy and basic education for adults and young people is required. Information is scattered, especially that which reflects on actual experience, although some useful analyses have appeared in the past 5 years or so (Arnové and Graff, 1987; Bhola, 1984; Comparative Education Review, 1990; Hamadache and Martin, 1986; Street, 1984; Wagner, 1987). Strengthening the collection and the careful analysis of data, in a way specifically designed to inform the policy process, is an urgent international priority. Perhaps of equal urgency is the task of initiating focused research on major policy questions, a task which differs from the collection, documentation and analysis of information. Many questions exist which cannot be answered merely through understanding existing information once gathered: they need to be the subject of carefully planned and focused investigations, designed to inform policy and practice.

30. Nevertheless, evidence has been accumulating over time in an incremental fashion. Much has been derived from observations of experience, evaluations of governmental and international efforts, and policy reviews conducted by various constituencies. When the evidence at hand is in fact reviewed, it is astonishing how much knowledge is at hand. In particular, there now exists a rich array of data concerning methods of teaching literacy and basic knowledge to adults and young people.

31. Most comprehensive analyses, to date, have been historical and theoretical. More up-to-date work is required in the economic, psychological and anthropological aspects of literacy. In particular, economists have not allocated sufficient attention to literacy and basic education among adults and young people, particularly through rates-of-return analysis and related means of assessing program outcomes. As noted above, the lack of substantial World Bank financing of literacy and basic education programs has led to a gap of some significance in Bank analyses of the outcomes of education, given the tendency for Bank analysts to concentrate on data emanating from Bank projects. What is most lacking in this regard is extensive quantitative data on the economic consequences of adult literacy and its relative costs and outcomes, particularly in relation to (a) primary schooling and (b) traditional forms of vocational training. There is also the need to compare the returns from varying approaches to adult literacy and basic education with each other.

32. Comment is required here on the one major exception to date. Between 1966 and 1974 UNDP financed and Unesco implemented the Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) which had at its core a concern to provide quantitative assessments of the link between work-oriented literacy and worker productivity (Coombs, 1985; Gillette, 1987; Jones, 1988; Levine, 1982; Unesco/UNDP, 1976). The general intention for the core of 11 national programs was (a) to develop a new functional approach to literacy, relating it to job requirements, (b) design teaching programs for carefully selected participants, and (c) measure the impact of instruction on worker productivity and generate international comparisons. The first two aims were generally successful, evidenced by the number of countries continuing the program once UNDP support had terminated. The last aim ran into a complex set of intellectual and methodological difficulties, partly because of the dual purpose of the EWLP to innovate and to evaluate, partly because of difficulties faced in some countries in producing reliable quantitative data, and partly because of inexperience in handling cross-national data for the purpose of producing international comparisons. For this reason, it is inadvisable to make overall claims about the EWLP: some aims were admirably met, others not. It is misleading to claim it as either a "success" or a "failure". Commentators today need to be highly selective when making claims about it.

33. Such consideration of the EWLP is pertinent here as it constitutes the only example of an international effort to generate hard evidence, on a wide scale, of the economic dynamics of adult literacy. Given its overall design, the EWLP was better geared to identify program failures than program successes. Nevertheless, careful and selective use of reliable EWLP data, usually on an individual country basis, can produce relevant and appropriate information. More dangerous would be resort to international comparisons or global claims. One area in which the EWLP generated no data concerns its central hypothesis, that selective targeting of participants with work-oriented programs of literacy teaching produces more handsome economic returns than more diffuse mass campaigning. One investigation of the EWLP concluded in 1985 as follows: "In our view the EWLP, despite its disappointing immediate outcomes, was a well-justified investment in terms of the important down-to-earth lessons it yielded. It was a good investment, that is provided these lessons are taken seriously and put to good use" (Coombs, 1985, p 276).

Varieties of literacy - policy implications:

34. At the heart of any policy decision concerning priorities in literacy provision for adults and young people lies the question of the fundamental view of literacy adopted. The past 10-15 years have seen widespread acceptance of the fact that literacy is complex. Its complexity helps explain failures in policy, when simplistic or inappropriate views of literacy were adopted in the planning and implementation of programs. Consideration of varying interpretations or approaches to literacy is no longer seen as a dry academic indulgence: experience shows that all decisions concerning adult literacy strategies reflect basic assumptions or choices about these varying ways of viewing literacy, and that conceptual carelessness concerning fundamental issues can lead to errors, wastages and inefficiencies in programming (Jones, 1990; Street, 1984).

35. In brief, there are three broad views about literacy whose differences bear significance for program planning and implementation (Freire and Macedo, 1987; Goody, 1968; Lerner, 1958; Oxenham, 1980; Street, 1984; Unesco/UNDP, 1976). First, there is the tendency to see literacy in straightforward terms as a simple means of communication. It regards communication through visual records as more efficient than through oral means. It sees the literate person as a more or less autonomous unit in a network of communication. It sees literacy as a set of techniques to be learned, literacy being a neutral tool as a hammer or knife might be, or perhaps a neutral technique for the application of a tool. Early applications of this view saw a definable contrast between the "literate" and the "illiterate", in that literacy was a skill that was either present or missing in a person.

36. Second, there is the tendency to view literacy in more dynamic cognitive terms, with literacy and intellectual functioning seen as somehow

intertwined. This is a primarily technological view, that sees literacy as "the technology of the intellect". It recognises important cognitive consequences of literacy, not least the capacity for abstract thought, rationality, detached and critical thinking, and capacity for the cognitive application of symbolism. This approach places considerable emphasis on the behavioural consequences of increasing literacy/cognitive capacity. This approach also led the way towards seeing literacy more as a range or continuum of skills, and not as an absolute capacity with a minimum cut-off point dividing literacy from illiteracy.

37. Third, literacy can be seen as even more complex and multifaceted, whereby the context in which literacy develops has a profound bearing on its technical and cognitive aspects. Here is an approach that places emphasis on the learner's social location and circumstances. The context defines the literacy or literacies that should be taught, and in turn the literacy instruction affects the learner's perceptions and understandings of reality. This approach rejects any notion of "objectivity" in knowledge or in printed text, given the fact that the essential features of such content lie in the social contexts in which they are generated, interpreted and applied. Accordingly, literacy is seen in terms of consciousness (whereby the self and external realities are given meaning). This binding up of literacy with consciousness is seen not only in terms of the individual learner - it is seen to bear on group or social consciousness as well, given the social nature of language, knowledge and communication.

38. These divergent views or approaches need not compete against each other in absolute terms. The emphasis of one may well be highly appropriate in one policy setting, but not so in another. Perhaps they are best seen as contributing to a diverse set of policy options, although not all commentators would agree, as evidence appears to point to the need for successful programming to be informed and enriched by all three approaches. What is important is to accept these varying ways of interpreting literacy as more than theoretical abstractions. They have profound implications for policy and practice, and help explain wastages and inefficiencies in some programs and success in others. Experience now shows that costly errors in programming can be avoided in literacy work if greater attention is paid to fundamentals. In each setting, basic questions need to be answered about the fundamental view of literacy being promoted and the justification for its adoption.

39. The most significant policy implication of this diversity in approaches to literacy is that there is no "single" literacy. Much programming has proceeded as if there were. The existence of a wide range of literacies in any given economic or social context carries with it the immediate implication of the need for choice. This in turn carries the possibility of considerable diversity in literacy programming. Planners who prefer things to be neat and tidy and who might prefer to promote a single approach to literacy might unwittingly be preserving considerable

inefficiencies in literacy provision. Diversity and flexibility (and, therefore, selectivity) need to be the hallmarks of policies for adult literacy. Multilateral, bilateral and governmental programs have, over the past 40 or more years, been slow to act upon this need for diversity (Coombs, 1985; Jones, 1988). There can be no single officially-sanctioned approach to adult literacy if effectiveness and efficiency are to be preserved. This carries significant implications for (a) the range of community services capable of reinforcing primary, basic and continuing education [discussed in paragraph 25] and (b) the contribution that can be made to governmental efforts through non-governmental organisations. It also reflects a fundamental tenet of contemporary educational planning, management and financing - that a fragmented or piecemeal approach is highly inappropriate given the need to plan and finance education systems as a whole, i.e. as systems. Although best seen as an integrated whole, education systems nevertheless need to be more flexible and less centralised and bureaucratised (Coombs and Hallak, 1987). Again, it is challenging for national authorities to make effective use of non-government organisations lying beyond the structural responsibilities of government, not least community, religious, private-sector, labour union and youth organisations.

40. This relates to the earlier point [paragraph 17] that the existence of a range of literacies raises the issue of the relevance or applicability of "school literacy" to what is required in various adult roles. Even referring to a single school literacy is perhaps unduly simplistic. Nevertheless, any young person leaving the primary school with good literacy skills is bound to require supplementary intervention in order to transform his or her school literacy into one or more literacies required for the effective pursuit of adult roles. For those leaving primary school with inadequate literacy skills, this need for supplementation seems all the more pronounced.

41. The varying patterns of literacy have important policy implications for the content of literacy programs, to be commented on in greater detail below [paragraph 52]. No teaching program is devoid of content. That is to say, none can be confined to linguistic analysis or communication technique alone. A basic issue facing the designers of literacy programs for adults and young people - and this is bound up with the fundamental view of literacy adopted - is to decide what knowledge or skills base is most appropriate as a vehicle for the literacy instruction itself. In this area, there is rich international experience and data. At this point, it is important merely to note that what the content of a program can usually provide is a rationale for the program and the motivation for learners to participate in it. This is irrespective of whether literacy is taken to be (a) an end in itself (for example, as an expression of human rights), or (b) a means to individual growth and development (by encouraging cognitive development and changes in consciousness), or (c) a means of social and community transformation (through changes in group awareness and attitudes, or through applications of the new skills and knowledge acquired through literacy).

42. This view of content helps explain many failures among adult learners: it has been the content that has been inappropriate, not necessarily the quality of literacy teaching in and of itself. Primary school teachers who in their community literacy work in the late afternoon or evening fail to adapt their content to an appropriate adult world will doubtless see their adult students dwindle away. Work-oriented programs that seek to impart irrelevant vocational knowledge will also see a lack of success on the literacy side. Once the fundamental issue of content is appropriately settled, many procedural concerns fall into place. Content is so important that it has as much to do with the underlying justifications or rationales of programming as it has to do with effective teaching.

43. A final implication of the varieties of literacy is perhaps the most obvious: how does the need for diversity impinge on national language policy and on the language aspects of literacy teaching? We know that initial literacy instruction is decidedly more effective and lasting when conducted in the learner's own language, and that drop-out rates escalate for literacy instruction in other languages. At the same time, national authorities have an obligation to anticipate the emerging communication needs of a country and to initiate and support educational programs to meet those needs - needs often involving the choice of a single national language or the official promotion of a small number. This issue also relates to the critical need for adequate and appropriate reading matter for the period following instruction. Clearly, the language of such material is a far from trivial issue. Last, the choice of language for instruction needs to be considered in the context of the rationales of and justifications for literacy, and of the urgency of transmitting required information throughout communities in print form (Gorman, 1977; Hamadache and Martin, 1986; Ryan, 1985; Street, 1984).

Who to include and why? the identification and selection of learners:

44. The key issue confronting providers of literacy and basic education for adults and young people is how to determine the rationale, scope and extent of any particular program. This is as true of a mass campaign as it is for a group of 10 workers in a factory. Principles determining the identification and selection of participants in literacy and basic education programs come to the heart of the justification and rationales for these programs. Experience has shown that when a random or untargeted approach has been followed by program failures, wastages or inefficiencies, a likely factor may have been the lack of a clear rationale for the program i.e. a justification with clear policy implications. As will become clear below, this is not necessarily an argument against mass or large scale programming: even the largest programs can succeed if they have a clear rationale and participants are selected and taught on that basis (Adiseshiah, 1976; Arnove and Graff, 1987; Bhola, 1984; Coombs, 1985; Unesco/UNDP, 1976).

45. Just as there can be no single view of literacy, so too can there be no single rationale for effective literacy programming. Many rationales are possible, and experience shows that many can be successfully applied. A common pitfall in much multilateral and bilateral programming is the tendency to seek standardised approaches to social sectors, especially that range of sectors directly impinging on human resources development. National authorities, as well as multilateral and bilateral agencies, for reasons of convenience or lack of experience, have frequently been tempted to opt for global or standardised approaches for widespread application. This, simply, is not an option for literacy and basic education for adults and young people. What is more appropriate is for planning authorities to acknowledge the breadth of potential approaches, and for external agencies to provide support on a flexible basis, responding to need according to local circumstances and requirements. Experience points to the need for diversity within countries as much as diversity between countries.

46. A review of experience over the past 40 years or so indicates that a wide range of rationales has been successfully applied to adult literacy and basic education programs. In practice, rationales have been frequently blurred, applied in tandem in a way that prevents clear identification of those rationales that have provided a "bottom-line" justification for programs. Nevertheless, a range of approaches can be identified.

47. Much experience has been gained when literacy and basic education programs have sought to lead to immediate and direct increases in worker productivity. These are programs in which inadequate literacy and basic knowledge have been identified with confidence as obstacles to increased output. Many of the country studies constituting the EWLP had this as their primary focus (Unesco/UNDP, 1976). At times, the promise of significant increases in worker productivity is sufficient justification to include some learners and exclude others (Jamison and Lau, 1982; Lockheed, Jamison and Lau, 1980).

48. There is one particular group for whom literacy and basic educational provision can constitute perhaps the most exciting and rewarding area of all educational investments. This relates to young people who have had little or no effective primary schooling, but who find themselves engaged in useful employment or just on the margins of it. Often, their inadequate literacy skills constitute an identifiable obstacle to dramatic increases in productivity. For relatively little cost, intensive and often short programs can produce all the documented advantages of primary schooling, plus the potential benefits of motivation to learn, relevance of program content (for both the learner and society), and immediate applicability. For a society with the capacity to expend funds for educational investment, it would be difficult to find a more dynamic and rewarding area.

49. In short, raising worker productivity directly through literacy and basic education, and using such instruction to bring young people to appropriate employment that adequately reflects their capacities, have the potential to provide equivalent or even higher economic returns than general primary education, provided that the learners are carefully identified and the programs of instruction relevant to their employment.

50. There are many additional rationales for literacy and basic educational provision for adults and young people. Some have direct economic justification, others relate to the generation of socially useful knowledge, attitudes and skills. Some reflect a commitment to equity. In many cases, these rationales overlap, the lines between economic, instrumentalism and equity becoming blurred. Here it frequently becomes difficult to measure outcomes in strictly economic terms, especially in the short term.

51. A factor of some significance concerning rationales for adult literacy and basic education is the content or subject matter used as a vehicle for literacy instruction. Reference has been made [paragraph 41] to the significance of content: it provides a rationale, it determines relevance, it is a key factor in learner motivation, and it provides teachers with the necessary vehicle for teaching the technical aspects of literacy (Coombs, 1985). Content, then, relates to instrumental justifications of literacy programs in significant ways, through the teaching of useful knowledge, skills and attitudes. Literacy programs are as good a medium for such teaching as any other, although they take longer in the first instance, because both literacy and useful content is being taught. However, once some basic literacy capacity has been achieved, the teaching of the instrumentally useful content becomes much more efficient, as printed information can be applied to the task. One major finding in a broad-ranging study in 1985 was as follows: "Teaching literacy to adults as a discrete subject, divorced from other learning needs of strong immediate interest and concern to the particular learners, carries a high risk of failure. Teaching it in a primary school classroom with a primary teacher as instructor compounds that risk" (Coombs, 1985, p 276).

52. The advantages of combining literacy teaching with useful knowledge have long been acknowledged. In the 1940s and 1950s, "fundamental education" programs were essentially programs of enriching literacy teaching with economically and socially useful knowledge, including health and nutrition (Unesco, 1947). "Functional literacy" programs that date from the mid-1960s applied literacy more directly to work-related and other task-oriented contexts (Unesco/UNDP, 1976). From the early 1970s, literacy was frequently couched in terms of "basic human needs", an approach reminiscent of fundamental education (Coombs, Prosser and Ahmed, 1973; Coombs and Ahmed, 1974). Radical programs have seen literacy teaching used as an effective vehicle for political education or, in some cases, propagandising (Arnové and Graff, 1987). Cultural interpretations have

sought to provide a broader definition of functionality that economic relevance alone (Bataille, 1976).

53. There is a multitude of ways in which the dissemination of useful knowledge is made more speedy and effective through integration with literacy programs. We have an abundance of evidence that providing a combination of literacy and basic knowledge to mothers in rural areas can have a profound effect on their fertility, the health of their families, the learning potential of their children, and the cultural cohesiveness of their community, findings taken up below [paragraph 64]. Such outcomes are often less easy to quantify than increases in the productivity or wages of salaried workers. But the developmental benefits of such outcomes are not necessarily the lesser because they are delayed or difficult to measure. We also know with confidence that inadequate literacy levels are significant obstacles when information needs to be quickly disseminated, as in the case of AIDS prevention, for example.

54. A useful criterion for inclusion in literacy and basic education programs is equity. However, like human rights, a commitment to equity does not always provide a specific or focused guide to policy or programming. For example, equity considerations might demand the formulation of special programs of instruction for an ethnic minority group, or a remote community, or more generally for women and older girls (Acker et al, 1984; Carron and Ngoc Chau, 1980; Davies, 1986; Kelly, 1987; Kelly and Elliott, 1982; Preston, 1981; Robertson, 1984). But equity as a goal is an insufficient determinant of teaching content. What equity commitments might provide is the opportunity for such groups to take greater control of their lives, and to take their own initiative in shaping the educational and social programs provided for them, especially those financed and organised by governments.

55. This points to a major difference between primary schooling for children and literacy and basic education programs for adults and young people. Experience teaches us that many traditional adult literacy programs have failed because the learners were, in effect, treated as children. This is not simply to do with teaching content, materials and texts (which often were those used in school in any case). It has more to do with control. Philosophers have little difficulty in putting in loco parentis arguments forward concerning the intervention of the school in children's lives: the absolute freedom or discretion of children (to learn what they want or to behave as they wish) is curtailed by the school acting as an agent of socialisation on behalf of parents and the general community. Adult learners cannot be regarded or treated in the same way, although many traditional literacy programs have sought to, partly through perceptions of unschooled or poorly-literate adults or young people being in some way child-like. Not only must teaching styles be appropriate to mature persons, and not only must the content and the "literacies" imparted be adult-oriented: more important is the need for adults to be sure of their control and mastery over programs. This is perhaps the most

significant lesson from experience concerning the issue of who to include in programs and why. Adult learners cannot be effectively and efficiently taught if they lack a feeling of mastery over their participation.

56. Of the general, all-inclusive rationales for literacy which have fostered unselective participation and which have carried rather weak policy implications, it is the human rights rationale that stands out. Human rights justifications for universal literacy may be compelling, but they do little to inform programming policy. They might stimulate governmental and international commitments, but carry little to provide detailed guidance as how best to proceed. All too often, human rights arguments for universal literacy have been used to justify mass campaigning, when in fact the grounds of equity might more readily justify a selective and gradual approach. In other words, calls for universal literacy based on human rights might provide legitimation for literacy programs, but in and of themselves do little to guide programming, not least the provision of a rationale for individual programs and the identification and selection of participants. In fact, the resort to human rights arguments, in the absence of more focussed justifications, may well give rise to understandable concerns that a program lacks economic justification.

57. Last, in this consideration of justifications and rationales for adult literacy and basic education, the question needs to be asked about the circumstances in which mass, all-inclusive literacy campaigns are justifiable. Much conventional wisdom would see rather vague human rights appeals called into play, in the absence of more focussed economic or instrumentalist justification. Pragmatically, this would render mass campaigning an infrequent policy option. There is also the conventional wisdom that sees mass campaigns as wasteful and ineffective - yielding poor or temporary results at excessive cost. However, there is now a substantial amount of evidence concerning mass campaigning, and one thing is clear: mass campaigning cannot be quickly dismissed as a policy option. Recent analyses of a rich variety of mass campaigns point to creditable achievements, and also illustrate the factors determining success (Arnové and Graff, 1987; Bhola, 1984).

58. In brief, these factors for success in mass campaigns point to the absolute necessity for political will among leaders and social energy among the people in a context of confidence in the future. Effective mass campaigns seem to have been embedded in broader structural changes, whether political, cultural or economic. Universal literacy was seen as much as a necessary preparation for participation in a new social order as a celebration of that order. For this reason, it is impossible to isolate literacy as a factor in economic or social development in these contexts of mass campaigning - literacy programming was too fully integrated with other educational and social phenomena to be analysed as a separate variable. This also makes the costs and outcomes of mass campaigning

impossible to compare with other modes of literacy programming, both school-based and non-formal.

59. Yet two things are clear. One is that development and educational planners may well come to understand the ingredients of success in mass campaigning, but should also appreciate the extreme difficulty of replicating these ingredients for success. The other is that mass campaigning, when adopted, may fail to provide that diversity so essential to effective teaching, the active and continuing application of literacy, and the retention of literacy skills. By its very nature, the mass approach may too often fail to provide that diversity of "literacies" which so often is at the heart of ineffective primary schooling and conventional adult programs. At the same time, we now have sufficient evidence to conclude that mass campaigns can be, and have been, organised on a rational, efficient and effective basis.

Implications for practice of experience to date:

60. It is not the purpose of this paper to present a comprehensive review of the practical aspects of literacy and basic education programs for adults and young people. Several good reviews of experience have appeared in recent years [see paragraph 29]. Nevertheless, the preceding discussion bears clear lessons for policy makers, insofar as their impact on implementation is concerned. Further, many errors have been made in the past at high policy levels through a failure to grasp certain realities of literacy and basic education teaching in the field. Not least, the incessant desire to promote a single view of literacy with a single rationale through a single strategy with a single teaching method stands out as one of the fundamental reasons why so many literacy programs have failed in the past.

61. A particular temptation is to see literacy teaching primarily as a matter of employing the correct teaching methods, seeing past failures as technical problems needing technical solutions. As the EWLP itself concluded: "It is a mistake to design overwhelmingly technical solutions to literacy problems that are only partly technical" (Unesco/UNDP, 1976, p 122). Problems encountered in the field are more likely to be social, cultural, psychological and political than technical.

62. In 1985, a major survey of the global situation in education was published, which contained a thoughtful set of basic conclusions from experience to date in literacy work (Coombs, 1985, p 276). They are worth citing in full:

Lesson 1: In selecting audiences for literacy training, planners should give preference to people who will be able to make important

use of literacy in their daily lives and who, once they have learned how to read, will have ready and continuing access to relevant, useful, and interesting reading matter...If the local environment does not already contain such materials, provision for creating a continuing supply should be built into the literacy program: otherwise it is sure to be a waste of everybody's time.

Lesson 2: Literacy training materials for adults should be tailored to their environment and their interests, way of thinking, and style of learning. This means that the designers of such materials must be understanding and sensitive observers, capable of looking through the eyes of those they seek to serve. Such people are admittedly hard to find but anything less is likely to result in inert, school-like primers that will bore the adult learner. Most literacy materials for rural adults have been prepared at a distance by well-educated urban experts who did not appreciate the real interests and concerns of the rural audience.

Lesson 3: Teaching literacy to adults as a discrete subject, divorced from other learning needs of strong immediate interest and concern to the particular learners, carries a high risk of failure. Teaching it in a primary school classroom with a primary school teacher as instructor compounds that risk.

63. This major study concluded in the following terms: "Three crucial questions should be posed in future literacy efforts - questions that have too often been glossed over by the enthusiastic and well-intentioned advocates of the literacy doctrine. First, for whom is literacy crucially important? When and under what circumstances? Second, what kind of literacy, in what language, what form, and how broad and deep? Third, what are the most effective ways to motivate and assist people in acquiring such literacy?" (Coombs, 1985, p 281). It is clear that these remain critical policy and research issues. At the same time, it can be concluded here that we have a very great deal of evidence about these issues. The difficulty is generating better answers for application in specific settings, thereby promoting the principle of diversity in adult and young people's programs.

64. Another major survey (1986) of key issues in literacy strategy endorsed four basic principles underlying successful literacy programs that had been suggested ten years previously (Hamadache and Martin, 1986, pp 29-35). These were the principles of functionality, participation, integration and diversity, and are freely adapted from the report here:

- * **Functionality:** Learning to read and write cannot be seen as an end in itself. Therefore, particular importance attaches to the objectives that are set for adult literacy work. At the same time, frequent lapses in effectiveness stem from the gaps that can be seen between officially-sanctioned views of functionality (e.g. national development plans, employers'

productivity targets) and what learners themselves might regard and define as functionality. Further, views of functionality, once accepted, should not work against the need for diversity in the varieties of literacy being promoted, not least the kind that effects deep-seated changes in individuals' and groups' consciousness.

- * **Participation:** Determining the functionality of literacy and basic education programs requires the participation of learners. It provides the only effective way of preventing considerable wastages and inefficiencies in adult and young people's programs. It would appear insufficient for adult learners merely to be persuaded of the functionality of a planned program: more valid would appear the requirement for them to take part in decisions affecting the community to which they belong. The goals of literacy and basic education programs, then, need to be clear and need to embody the learners' own reasons for participation. Misunderstandings often arise because planners and administrative staff do not always clearly perceive, or wrongly interpret, those factors which motivate or fail to motivate learners. In practice, this requires communication and dialogue of some sort, without which there can be no true education.
- * **Integration:** Literacy programs for adults and young people cannot be effective if they are divorced from (a) the lifelong process of acquiring useful knowledge, skills and attitudes, and (b) the whole set of economic and social changes underway in their communities. On the latter point, mere lip-service to national development goals is insufficient means of achieving such integration. At the same time, it needs to be conceded that many national development plans are extremely dry exercises, divorced from the dynamics of the national economy and from social realities. The onus for integration is double-sided, placing simultaneous obligations on both literacy planners and development planners. As President Nyerere has put it, "if adult education is to contribute to development, it must be a part of life - integrated with life and inseparable from it....[This] means that adult education should promote change....Further, it means that adult education encompasses the whole of life, and must build upon what already exists".
- * **Diversity:** There is no such thing as a single model for literacy and basic education programs. "They must adapt themselves to circumstances, individuals, socio-economic and cultural contexts and living conditions and draw their inspiration from them". In practice, a policy trade-off would seem warranted between one extreme of generating a multitude of "made-to-measure" programs and a single national model that denies the variety of linguistic, ethnic, cultural and economic dynamics of relevance to literacy and basic education. Both politically and technically, this trade-off is frequently a difficult one.

Conclusions to Part C:

65. 1. Although the need is clear for more focused research on adult and young people's literacy and basic education and for more extensive and careful analysis of available data, sufficient evidence and experience exists for effective programming.
2. Many past inefficiencies can be explained by the application of a single model of literacy.
3. In each policy context, due regard needs to be given to which particular view of literacy is being promoted, and how it can be justified in practical terms, especially the identification of learners and the subject matter underpinning their instruction.
4. It is not common for "school literacy" to remain pertinent for the range of future adult roles.
5. Programs invite inefficiencies when they are conducted in the absence of or contrary to language policies that realistically cater for the combined needs of the nation, community and individual.
6. Many varying rationales have been successfully applied to literacy and basic education programs: there can be no single rationale to guide programming in all contexts. International and aid agencies, in particular, need to be sensitive to their obligation to assist rational choice rather than forcefully promoting standardisation.
7. Successful rationales to date have included raising worker productivity, integrating literacy teaching with economically and socially useful content (including urgently required information), and enabling (as opposed to being the sole or primary cause of) a range of individual and social improvements in the quality of life.
8. Equity and human rights are significant stimulants to action, but are somewhat weak determinants of program content, approaches to teaching, and selection of learners.
9. Adult learners cannot be efficiently and effectively taught if they feel a lack of mastery over their participation.
10. Mass campaigning cannot be quickly dismissed as a policy option. The factors for success are now better understood than previously, but are not easily replicated. Mass campaigns also run the risk of denying that diversity so essential for success.
11. Teaching literacy as a discrete subject to adults carries a high risk of failure.

12. The key principles for guiding policy and practice in literacy and basic education have been usefully summed up as functionality, participation, integration and diversity.

**D: THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RETURNS FROM INVESTMENTS
IN LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Education and development - some current understandings:

66. It is clear that the processes of modernisation and industrialisation that transformed the economies of contemporary western societies in the 18th and 19th centuries took place with a substantial literacy base. This base of adult literacy may have been as high as 40 percent. The subsequent expansion of formal and non-formal education in those societies had less to do with this literacy base as with such factors as the growth of monetarised economies, urbanisation, occupational diversification, and the spread of public and private sector infrastructure. This factor alone makes it difficult to calculate precisely the contribution of education to economic development: at some stages in development it may continue to yield a substantial pay-off; at others the pay-off might be negligible. Especially challenging is calculating the social rates-of-return from education, compared with the more straightforward private returns as expressed in wages. Therefore in the industrialised western countries, although baseline literacy seems to have been required for sustained future growth, further demand for literacy and schooling seems to have depended on the emergence of other modernising phenomena, which in turn were themselves consolidated as a result of educational expansion (Anderson, 1965; Cipolla, 1969; Connell, 1980; Graff, 1987; Kahan, 1965; Resnick, 1983).

67. Much of the West's experience can inform other societies, but only given comparable labour market structures. For example, in the West useful measures of economic productivity and growth can be derived from the analysis of movements in wages in the formal sector, a sector which overwhelmingly dominates national economies. Many developing countries, by contrast, have experienced the emergence of more complex labour markets. A small, well-paid and highly educated employment sector might exist alongside an extremely large informal sector, where only marginal rates of subsistence apply, complicated by great variations in the operation of the agricultural sector. The link between education and the complexities of developing country labour markets would seem to be far more complex than in the West. As a result, policy formulation in developing countries goes astray when it seeks to extract changes in labour market dynamics through educational means that only seem relevant in the West (Arndt, 1987; Todaro, 1981).

68. Evidence to date presents a convincing case that formal and non-formal education enhances people's productivity (Bowman, 1980; King, 1980; Lockheed, Jamison and Lau, 1980; Psacharopoulos, 1981). Relatively little is known about what education, precisely, does to people that makes them more productive (Foster, 1985). We have at our disposal overwhelming evidence of the "spillover" effects of education in reducing political instability and violence, orderly transfers of political power, controlled population growth, increased life expectancy, health and nutrition levels, and much more. But the nature of these spillover effects is complex, often subtle and more than occasionally ambiguous. This makes extremely hazardous the formulation of development and education policies purely on the basis of such findings. This is true for all modes of educational delivery whether formal or non-formal, and for all levels of formal educational provision.

Literacy, basic education and development:

69. Beginning at the macro level, evidence from the 1980s shows that the rapidly growing developing countries were those that had above average performance in both literacy and life-expectancy. A World Bank study of 75 developing countries for the period 1960 to 1977 found a strong and clear link between literacy and economic growth (Hicks, 1980). The top 12 countries (in terms of economic growth) started the period with above average literacy levels as well as above average income levels. Once adjusted for the differences in income, these countries had significantly higher literacy levels than their higher income levels would normally imply. In addition, this study identified a strong correlation between literacy and life expectancy, suggesting that literacy has a strong impact on health and hygiene, again taking the higher income levels into account.

70. A subsequent World Bank study sought to solve some of the correlation/causality ambiguities in the first set of findings by a system of simultaneous equations (Wheeler, 1980). This study could not find a strong link between growth and the variables of life expectancy and nutrition. Rather, it strengthened evidence for the strong influence of changes in literacy on changes in output, and identified an additional important role for literacy in reducing fertility.

71. This last finding linked up with other research then being conducted by the World Bank on the effects of education on health, notably life expectancy, child nutrition and mortality, and the link between health and productivity (Cochrane, O'Hara and Leslie, 1980; see also Casteneda, 1986). In brief, the first study found that, in developing countries in particular, literacy far exceeded per capita income as a factor of significance in mortality and life expectancy. Second, the study found that as mothers' literacy skills increased, so too did their children's nutrition, with equally "unequivocal" evidence linking increasing maternal literacy with decreasing infant and child mortality. Third, the study

pointed to various roles of literacy in enhancing productivity levels through better health and nutrition.

72. This study reinforced in turn a major Bank study that identified substantial gains in the efficiency and productivity of farmers through basic education and literacy (Lockheed, Jamison and Lau, 1980; Jamison and Lau, 1982).

73. Evidence about the effects of literacy and basic education on productivity centres on social-psychological research into their potential to transform individual attitudes and values in ways consistent with increased productivity (Inkeles, Schuman and Smith, 1967; Inkeles and Holsinger, 1974; Lerner, 1958; McClelland and Winter, 1969). Lists of personal traits that are frequently enhanced by literacy programs are common, and usually include: dexterity, speed of output, learning aptitude, conscientiousness, thrift, improved health, punctuality, safety awareness, and team spirit (Phillips, 1970; Unesco/UNDP, 1976).

74. Purely cognitive outcomes of literacy education have also been frequently listed, and commonly include: rational and critical thinking, detachment, abstraction, use of symbolic thinking, and refined understandings of cause and effect (Goody and Watt, 1968). One danger frequently posed by commentators is the common lack of baseline surveys of the vocational or cognitive traits of persons prior to literacy training. We should not be too hasty to downgrade the capacities that developed historically in traditional societies (Hamadache and Martin, 1986; Unesco/UNDP, 1976).

75. For societies undergoing economic transformation, literacy seems to be a highly useful "enabling" rather than "causal" capacity, making possible a whole variety of outcomes, linking up with an array of concomitant factors in development, and facilitating individuals' entry into the change process so that they might contribute to its outworking (Foster, 1985; Herrick and Kindleberger, 1983; Hicks, 1985).

76. Experience gained up to the mid-1960s enabled a prominent economist to enumerate how literacy contributes to economic development, by (1) raising the productivity of new literates; (2) raising the productivity of individuals working with literates; (3) facilitating the flow of general knowledge (e.g. about health and nutrition) and thus reducing the cost of transmitting useful information; (4) stimulating the demand for technical and vocational training; (5) acting as a device for selecting the more able and enhancing their occupational mobility; and (6) strengthening economic incentives. This commentator concluded with the following significant point: "Unfortunately, an enumeration of the economic benefits of increased

enrolment rates in primary and secondary schools would yield an almost identical list, and the question is: How is the planner to choose between more adult literacy and more school education? The difficulty is that adult literacy and primary schooling are not all-or-nothing alternatives...When costs are brought into the picture, the presumption that school education is the more profitable investment loses much of its force...The arguments in favor of school education are that its impact on the future productivity of the individual is probably greater and that this impact lasts longer; but it also costs more, not per year but over the whole cycle of instruction. The arguments in favor of adult literacy are that it yields an early return and that its costs are soon liquidated" (Blaug, 1966, pp 393-7).

77. One of the most difficult matters for planners is comparing the economic aspects of primary schooling with those of adult literacy and basic education, so that rational decisions can be made for each, as part of an integrated plan for education operating as a system. Some evidence exists on the issue of how many hours of literacy teaching combined with functional knowledge and skills might equate to a stated number of years of primary schooling. Of course, calculating such equivalence is hazardous, but we know enough that is notionally useful when the analysis is confined to essentially equivalent levels of literacy and basic knowledge. The basic training acquired by primary school students over a 2-year period has been matched by adult and young people's programs lasting 600-700 hours in some countries ranging down to 260 hours in others. Elsewhere, primary schooling of four years' duration was matched by programs of 750 to 450 hours, holding content and skills roughly equivalent (Unesco/UNDP, 1976).

78. These findings relate in an interesting fashion to EWLP conclusions concerning the relative costs of primary schooling and adult literacy and basic education (i.e. functional work-oriented literacy in the EWLP). The tentative EWLP estimates were based on comparisons of the equivalent lengths of basic teaching, explicitly excluding content and other aspects that do not refer directly to the literacy and basic content of both primary and adult programs (Unesco/UNDP, 1976). EWLP comparisons were made in 8 of the 11 countries, and in one case the basic training furnished by the primary school was clearly cheaper than the corresponding adult program. In the remaining 7 cases, functional literacy was cheaper (per successful adult learner) by significant margins - 85 percent in one country, 63 percent in another, 28 percent in another, down to 2 percent in the last instance.

79. Focused research is required to compare the outcomes of adult and young people's programs with those of primary schooling. There is also a need to assess in quantifiable terms the relative benefits of various approaches to adult literacy and basic education, i.e. compared with each other. What is possible at this stage is to apply the force of logic: if we can be confident about the economic contribution of primary schooling

(even given its various limitations) then we can be equally confident about the contribution of parallel programs of literacy and basic education for the right groups of adults and young people. This is especially so given the fact that these programs will reflect a more relevant range of "adult literacies" which can be immediately applied in economically and socially useful ways. Further, experience has taught us enough about the likely causes of inefficiency and wastage in adult and young people's programs (especially untargeted or random selection of learners and inappropriate content) to enable careful comparisons of the returns from different modes of adult literacy promotion. We also know that provision of effective programs for adults and young people that effectively combine literacy with useful knowledge and skills are by no means expensive when compared with the costs of primary schooling.

80. In 1985, a state-of-the-art review summed up the interactive dynamics of formal and non-formal approaches to literacy, in the context of rural development: "The evidence now seems overwhelming that education is associated with substantial gains in the efficiency and productivity of farmers. However, it is equally clear that such gains are maximized in environments that are already changing rather than in static traditional circumstances. The effect of education seems to depend upon the existence of literacy and numeracy (rather than the provision of agricultural education in the schools) but schooling must be regarded as an accelerator in the development process: its role will be limited without the existence of other modernizing elements. Once again this points to the interactive relation between schooling and other aspects of change in the development process" (Foster, 1985, p 1536).

81. An issue of some relevance at this point is the extent to which the primary school curriculum should be vocationally-oriented. The determination of this issue has significant implications for the overall character, reach and relevance of the non-formal adult education sector in many countries (Foster, 1965). In brief, earlier manpower planners tended to see the schools as vehicles for promoting specific skills, but it is now abundantly clear that schools do not and cannot act in this manner. The same researcher has concluded: "Formal schooling is essentially complementary in nature to less formal systems that impart such vocational skills and the weakness of many earlier educational strategies lay in their disregard of highly efficient informal education structures. Perhaps formal schooling largely through the provision of literacy, numeracy, and general education generates a basic "ability to learn" that is vital in the innovatory development process. This in turn implies the greater importance of basic and primary education in development, particularly in the less developed countries" (Foster, 1985, pp 1535-6).

82. These considerations are closely connected with the earlier discussion [paragraphs 12-20] concerning the limitations of primary schooling. Even the best systems of primary education need to have their

economic and social contributions consolidated and extended by systematic and intentional commitments to basic and continuing learning opportunities for adults and young people. In practice, especially as far as basic, useful knowledge is concerned (including work-related knowledge and skills) it is not always easy to draw the line between basic and continuing education. A commitment to one normally requires a commitment to the other, and an integrated approach to policy, planning and financing that preserves a systems approach to learning would seem to be warranted.

83. One thing is clear, and this is that appropriate and cost-effective programs of literacy and basic education for adults and young people could be improved by a greater decentralisation of decision-making processes thereby effecting a greater responsiveness to market signals and forces operating at both national and local levels. "This type of policy orientation results from a greater understanding of the ecology of educational development and a recognition of uneven rates of structural and economic change within national boundaries. The manifest failures of macroeducational planning suggest the need for new micro- and pragmatically-oriented policies that can be rapidly adjusted to meet changing circumstances" (Foster, 1985, p 1536).

84. This need for diversity relates squarely to the fundamental point made earlier [paragraphs 34-40] that there can be no single literacy, no single measure, no single view of its impact. For this reason alone, there can be no single measure of the returns it generates in development. Quantitative estimates as well as qualitative estimates of its impact depend highly on what kind of literacy is being analysed. In turn, this consideration opens up the thorny issue of just what kind of economic and social development is being sought, and whether the range of development models can be mirrored by a corresponding range of literacies. The issue of how best to translate development objectives into curriculum content is also unavoidable.

85. Experience to date, especially that gained through the EWLP, teaches caution about a neat and ordered view of how literacy stimulates development. In theory, literacy has often been seen to lead in a logical way from the learner's "integration into the milieu", to the learner's "control of the milieu", and even further to the "transformation of the milieu" (Unesco/UNDP, 1976). Many programs have sought to generate this orderly sequence, which was generated in the mid-1960s to promote a development-oriented approach termed "functional literacy". In practice, planners grossly underestimated the complexities of literacy work in the field, and the complexities of education's contribution to development.

Conclusions to Part D:

86. 1. Such economic outcomes as measurable increases in worker productivity are obtainable through the intervention of appropriate literacy and basic education programs.
2. In certain identifiable circumstances, the returns in terms of worker efficiency and output can be more handsome than those of primary schooling because of their immediacy and their lesser duration and cost. However, these benefits are balanced by the fact that the older the adult learner, the fewer productive years he or she will have remaining in the workforce.
3. Bolder conclusions are possible when a broader view of economic and social development is adopted, through the strong correlations that have been frequently documented between literacy (and the associated acquisition of useful knowledge, skills and attitudes), and a variety of development indicators, not least health and nutrition, life expectancy and fertility.
4. Wider socio-cultural benefits have also been documented, providing evidence of the general impact on the quality of individual and social life through increases in cultural levels, reinforcement of the role of formal education, and the consolidation of equity and human rights.
5. Literacy and basic education are perhaps better seen as enabling factors in the complex matter of development rather than as strictly causal factors. This makes difficult the task of calculating the returns from literacy and basic education among adults and young people, and makes hazardous the practice of basing policies on phenomena not entirely understood.
6. The costs of effective literacy and basic education programs for adults and young people compare favourably with the costs of primary schooling.
7. Our knowledge of what commonly causes inefficiencies and wastages in adult and young people's programming is now sufficiently advanced to prevent them.

E: LESSONS FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTION AND CO-OPERATION

Determinants of - and priorities for - effective international programming:

87. Experience gained to date bears strongly on international action and

co-operation. On the assumption that promoting universal learning opportunities carries international obligations, the question needs to be asked: what is the character of international obligation and how does it translate into effective and appropriate international actions? The intention in what follows is not to put forward a comprehensive plan of international action. Rather, the implications of experience to date are addressed, with warnings aired about possible sources of inefficiency and ineffectiveness in international programming.

88. There is a need for intellectual openness and rigour. Often for reasons to do with convenience, managerial neatness and financial stringency, international organisations can be tempted to adopt rather straightforward views of things. It helps them promote their services and cultivate their external relations. Complexity and diversity can be inconvenient. It is important to forge a workable and realistic relationship between theorising and programming. Theoretical considerations may be inappropriate as ends in themselves (in the context of international co-operation), but they remain mandatory concerns if programming is to be sound. A dynamic relationship between theorising and programming will see each being informed by the other, each contributing in its way to better policy formulation. Rigorous and honest evaluation can also be inconvenient, as was learned during the EWLP, but remains indispensable for effective international activity. Political and organisational pressures might build up for ever-new rationales, strategies and projects, but experience warns against the premature discarding of approaches that have clearly been shown to be effective and useful.

89. There is also a need for modesty. Too frequently, the international community seems tempted to make excessive claims about what is achievable, affordable or advisable. On occasion, a single agency might feel the need to exert itself over others through resort to immodesty. More likely, the international community as a whole can unwittingly raise expectations in nation states about the capacity of the international and development co-operation system to effect appropriate and desirable changes. Excessive resort to generalisation and pretense can also be technically misleading, when national authorities are led to believe that new solutions to old problems are on the horizon.

90. A major lesson from experience to date is for the international community to foster greater diversity in universal learning strategies. It is clear that, for literacy, there can be no single preferred definition, style, strategy or application. A range of effective and appropriate approaches has been seen to emerge, and it is misleading and unhelpful to think that there can be a single, ideal path to universal learning opportunity. International commitments, then, need to foster both diversity between nations and diversity within nations. This requires considerable dexterity on their part, conceptually and managerially. A particular challenge is how international agencies might assist problems of national co-ordination in sectors beyond the structural responsibility of

national governments - the range of effective contributors to adult and young people's basic learning that includes community, religious, private-sector, labour union and youth organisations.

91. Effective international programming is hampered when there is an unclear division of labour between agencies, whether multilateral or bilateral, international or regional. Vague or unclear terms of reference can be unhelpfully matched by excessive claims to monopoly rights. This is a danger for well-resourced institutions and for those with wide-ranging intellectual (but narrower operational) mandates. A clear obstacle to programming effectiveness can be inter-agency rivalry. Problems confronting the achievement of universal learning opportunities seem so deeply embedded in global society that there would seem to be plenty of work for all. As a major survey on world education concluded in 1985, "meeting this need must be the work of many hands and minds and many organizations all over the world at every level" (Coombs, 1985, pp 282-3). This study concluded that, at the same time, there remains the need for a single institution to carry global responsibility for monitoring national, regional and international efforts, through special studies, expert meetings, publications, advice to policy makers and program implementors, research and analytical work, training, and "stimulation and encouragement" to independent scholars and organisations world-wide. It is perhaps obvious that these international arrangements are in place, and that it would be inadvisable and inappropriate to alter the long-standing consensus on the international division of labour. At the same time, the effectiveness of inter-agency working relations falls far short of what is required, whether between multilateral, bilateral, international and regional bodies. Whether a further dimension needs to be added - to enhance truly global co-operation and co-ordination - is well worth active consideration.

92. We also know enough about effective development co-operation in education to prevent many past errors. An international task force of some significance concluded in 1986 that, above all, educational aid required a long haul: "In the end the age-old problems of education and development have a joint solution - development (especially rural development) will help education succeed, as well as education's assisting development. The donors can help...by making long-term commitments... Instead of increasing resources and long-term commitment, however, overall bilateral aid to education has stagnated since the 1970s, and in some of the large bilateral agencies there are pressures to go for "quick return" activities rather than the long haul which education requires. The multilaterals have been only partially successful in filling the gap left by the multilaterals... Appropriate assistance to education today would give greater recognition not only to long-term commitment, but to the need for long-term involvement in countries' educational processes - not just with discrete projects but with activities in series, leaving room for continuous evaluation and adjustment" (Cassen and Associates, 1986, pp 146-7).

93. It should be clear that a new international commitment to literacy and basic education is urgent, not only for universal primary education but also for appropriate programs for adults and young people. Evidence about the contribution of basic education to economic and social development is so overwhelming that it is surprising to see this level of education still regarded by many agencies (especially bilateral and regional) as an inappropriate aid target.

94. This review of experience to date has highlighted factors that count for success and failure in literacy and basic education for adults and young people. It has drawn bold conclusions when they have been warranted, and has proceeded with caution where appropriate. In particular, many gaps in our knowledge and understanding have been identified. For too long, the policy formulation process in the field of adult literacy has been guided by faith. It is time for the international community to commit itself to the kinds of planned and focused research activity that will actively inform the policy formulation process. We need to know more of the dynamics of adult and young people's literacy and basic education as a component of a total learning system. We need to learn more of the determinants of an effective association between primary schooling and programs for adults and young people. We need to know more of what follows when a commitment is made to one particular view of literacy rather than to another, or when one strategy is preferred to another. We need to be able to compare the economic and social returns from investments in adult literacy and basic education with other forms of educational and non-educational investments. Research to provide insights to inform diverse policy settings powerfully will need to be intentional, comprehensive, inter-disciplinary and well-supported.

95. At the same time, we already have access to much that is highly pertinent to the policy and implementation process. However, it is not being collected, analysed and disseminated in a way adequate for planning and programming purposes. Much documentation work in the field of adult literacy and basic education resembles archival work: it lacks a sense of its immediate potential to inform decision-making. International agencies need to tackle research, documentation and analytical tasks on a variety of fronts. In-house capacities (especially through the short-term and long-term appointment of technically competent staff members) need dusting off and strengthening. Assistance is needed to build up research capacities in nation states. And radically new patterns of networking and interaction between researchers and analysts (whether located in international, national or scholarly institutions) need to be designed and developed.

96. The international community could do well to consider improved means of providing planning advice to nation states. There is a clear need for more focused and decision-oriented assistance than the mere dissemination of information on the one hand, and the attachment of side covenants to assistance (intended to influence change) on the other. In turn, this need

carries an obligation to understand more fully the operation of a national education system as a system. This would seem to imply not only some form of country-based programming, but also a commitment to strengthening national decision-making capacities.

97. The benefits of such a commitment could reduce many inefficiencies in international programming. In particular, they could enhance the capacities of national authorities to get the highest returns from international assistance, by enhancing their technical capacities to judge what forms of assistance are most appropriate. This is of critical importance in the adult literacy and basic education field in which diversity must be the hallmark of national strategy. Diversity implies choice, but the ordered and rational making of choice in this sector remains something of an ideal. The exercise of authority at the national level also becomes a challenge, given the complexities of co-ordinating and encouraging the active participation of relevant community, private sector and non-government agencies in literacy and basic education.

98. Reference has been made to the planning, supervisory and managerial advantages that accrue, in most countries, from the conduct of primary schooling as a single enterprise, planned as a whole with many opportunities for standardisation, an advantage beyond the reach of effective adult and young people's programming. This advantage for primary education provides enhanced opportunities for quality control, a dimension not frequently made explicit in literacy and basic education programs for adults and young people. A useful task for the international community would be to devise appropriate and flexible approaches to this quality dimension, assisting their integration with national and community decision-making, teaching and evaluation. This is clearly a multifaceted dimension, one in which a useful lead could immediately be made at the international level.

99. An international dimension of considerable significance relates to regional programming. Again, caution is needed. Even at the regional level, diversity and flexibility cannot be guaranteed. While one or two regions benefit from greater linguistic homogeneity than others, economic and cultural disparities remain considerable. Just as there seems to be no case for a single executing agency for operational programming at the international level, so too there seems to be no case for 5 or 6 regional equivalents. Nevertheless, just as a lead agency can operate effective global programs in research, documentation, assistance to national planning and co-ordination, training and publications, so too there would be considerable scope for these to be implemented at the regional level. More importantly, regional programming has the advantage of enhancing truly country-based international programming when in-country mechanisms (which are to be preferred) cannot be put in place. Again, modesty is essential here, as are precise terms of reference for regional structures and activities. To date, much regional programming in the literacy and basic education field has suffered from vagueness, pretense and impractical

aspirations. It is at this level that, in reality, inter-agency rivalries can become a serious operational problem. It is also at this level that weak divisions of labour and poor program co-ordination can become acute obstacles to effectiveness and efficiency. In short, any commitment to regionalism needs to be made in terms of explicit functional requirements, and adopted solely on the basis that international and country-based options are less attractive from a functional point of view.

Conclusions to Part E:

100. 1. Determinants of effective international programming include the need for intellectual openness and an active link between theorising and operations. This openness should assist when the effort is made to learn from past experience in international programming, and when there is undue institutional pressure to abandon demonstrably effective approaches in favour of innovation for its own sake. Excessive recourse to generalisation and pretense is a further barrier to rational international planning.
2. A common pitfall of international programming is the denial of diversity, both between countries and within them.
3. Effective international assistance is enhanced when agencies have clear terms of reference, when there is a sound division of labour between them, and when there is mutual regard for their various mandates, strengths, traditions and emphases.
4. Effective aid to education in general requires a long-term commitment. Quick returns from free-standing projects are elusive. Educational aid needs to be related more carefully to the planning and management of learning systems conceived as systems.
5. Priorities for international assistance to adult literacy and basic education are dominated by the need for this sector to be more seriously regarded as an integral part of national learning and development strategies.
6. Documentation and research activities conducted internationally need to be conceived as direct inputs to national decision-making, and supported accordingly.
7. Regional frameworks and programs should be supported only on the basis of functionality, when international and national programming would appear to be less appropriate options.

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